

A collection of Phantom Shields

For Sale





PHANTOM SHIELDS of the Wahgi Valley, Papua New Guinea Highlands



The Wahgi Valley, in the high montane region of New Guinea, first discovered by the outside world only in 1933, is an extraordinary place for a new contemporary art form to emerge at the beginning of the 21st Century: shields of warfare painted with the superhero of an American comic book, The Phantom.

The story of the Phantom Shields is one of the clash of two remarkably different cultures; the elaborate culture of the New Guinea Highlands, technologically in the stone-age meeting head-on the incredible complexity of the fast modern Western world, with aeroplanes, cars, new foods and guns.

This development was entirely home-grown. The Phantom first appeared in newspapers as comic strips in the early 1970s and soon after comic books were imported for sale in the regional towns of the New Guinea Highlands. The progression from comic book to use within Wahgi culture was gradual, and it was the convergence, in the 1980s and 1990s, of the first educated generations (who now could read the Phantom comic) with the re-emergence of tribal fighting (after a 40 year hiatus under colonial suppression), both together with the innovative spirit of Highlanders, saw juxtapositions emerge that incorporated the traditional beliefs with new concepts. Wahgi cosmology equated well with the historical storyline of the Phantom.

We wish to present two things here, at the San Francisco Tribal Art Fair 2021 – the new publication about the Phantom Shield story, entitled; “ MAN WHO CANNOT DIE: Phantom Shields of the New Guinea Highlands”, together with a small exhibition, for sale, of some Phantom shields.



left: Early Phantom comic; initially printed in tok pisin, but later only in English.

right: Phantom shield artist, John Wahgi, with 3 shields in 2012.



B6. SHIELD, Wahgi Valley, Jiwaka Province, PNG

Depicting The Phantom holding pistol and an axe

Inscribed: "Phantom"

The Phantom is shown in a protective, but aggressive stance, threatening to the enemy warriors. He holds an axe in one hand, a pistol in the other. Red dominates this Phantom image; it is a traditional favourite choice for shields as it incorporates the notions of both blood and victory.

Wood, natural pigment, commercial paint, rattan. H: 149.9 cm.

Collected by Chris Boylan, Mount Hagen, 2005.

Bert Collection, Toronto, Canada.

Photo: Jessica Lindsay Phillips.

Price: \$ 6,500





B11. SHIELD, Wahgi Valley, Jiwaka Province, PNG

Depicting The Phantom advancing holding a pistol

Inscribed: "Phantom"

The Phantom, painted using his comic book costume color of purple, is striding forward, in movement. To enemy warriors, he is moving towards them, gun in hand. Shields could be seen for long distances on the more open valley floor of the Wahgi Valley, where large-scale wars traditionally occurred; and the predominant yellow colour would stand out starkly in the landscape.

Wood, commercial paint, rattan, fiber. 155 x 56 cm.

Collected by Chris Boylan, Mount Hagen, 2009.

Private collection, Australia.

Photo: Stephen Oxenbury.

Price: \$ 6,000





B16. SHIELD, Wahgi Valley, Jiwaka Province, PNG

Depicting the Phantom firing two pistols

Inscribed: "Phantom"

The Phantom is aggressively firing guns; with the implied meaning hidden meaning that he is "invincible". Though only the upper torso is depicted, the figure has a sense of movement and energy, highlighted by the two flashes from the pistols.

Wood, natural pigment, commercial paint, rattan, fiber. 165 x 74 cm.

Collected by Chris Boylan, Mount Hagen, 2007.

Private collection, Australia.

Photo: Stephen Oxenbury.

Price: \$ 7,000





B17. SHIELD, Wahgi Valley, Jiwaka Province, PNG

Attached near base of shield: "Toyota LandCruiser emblem"

Depicting The Phantom holding a trident

The underlying design shows the traditional motifs of a central circle and radiating lines. A calm, confident Phantom is painted over. He has guns at his side, and also holds the traditional 3-pronged spear, an important part of Wahgi Valley warfare before the advent of the gun. Most probably same artist as B19. The car emblem gives status and power to the clan.

Wood, natural pigment, commercial paint, rattan, Toyota Land Cruiser emblem. 167.6 x 66 cm.

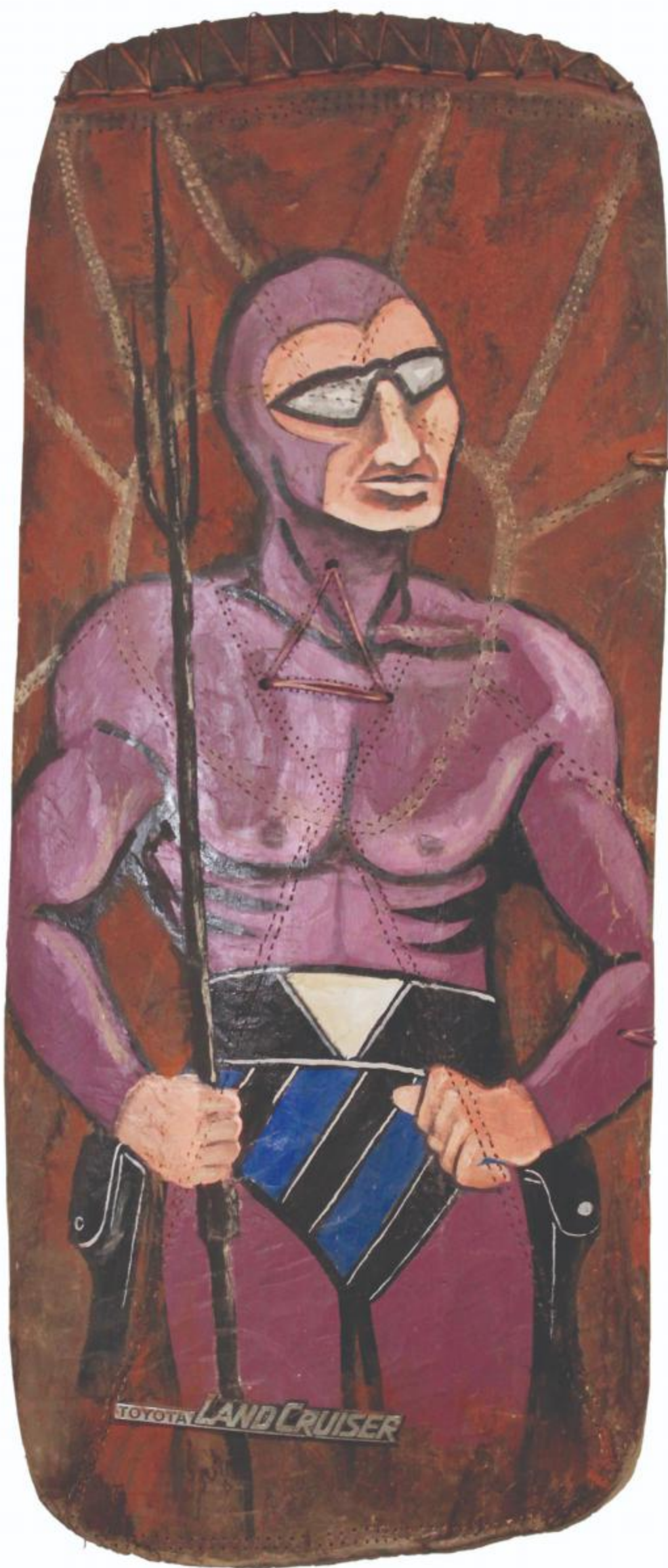
Collected by Chris Boylan, Mount Hagen, 2009.

Bert Collection, Toronto, Canada.

Photo: Jessica Lindsay Phillips.

Price: \$ 6,500





B19. SHIELD, Wahgi Valley, Jiwaka Province, PNG.

Depicting The Phantom holding a spear

Inscribed: "Phantom"

The Phantom stands, strongly but calmly, with guns holstered, and a traditional short spear. This shield is almost certainly painted by the same artist as B17. The artist has added traditional triangular designs at top and bottom.

Wood, commercial paint, rattan. 160 x 71.1 cm.

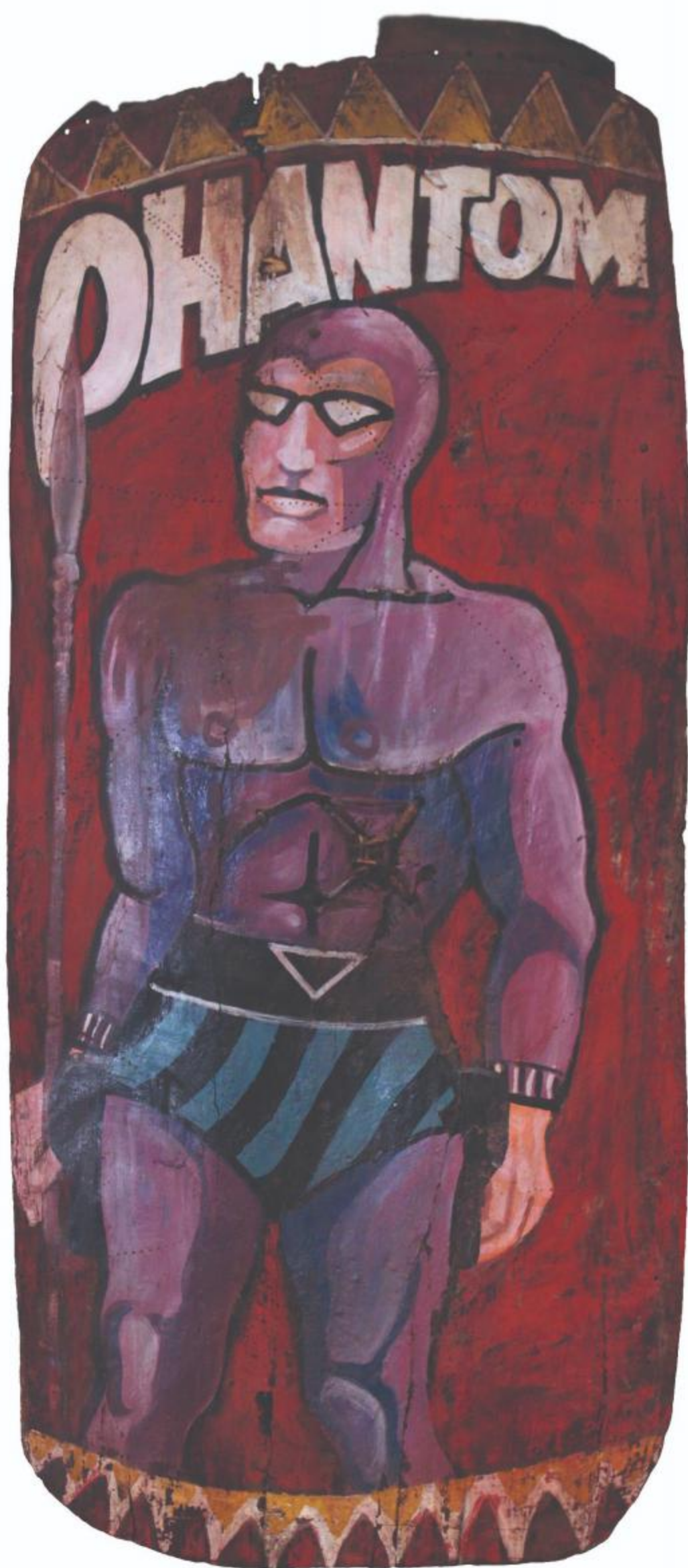
Collected by Chris Boylan, Mount Hagen, 2009.

Bert Collection, Toronto, Canada.

Photo: Jessica Lindsay Phillips.

Price: \$ 6,000





B27. SHIELD, Wahgi Valley, Jiwaka Province, PNG.

Depicting The Phantom standing with arms crossed

This is certainly an ancient shield, almost probably pre-contact or if not, early contact period. It was brought out for re-use after warfare re-established itself in the New Guinea Highlands post-Independence. It has a relatively early collection date, and the figure also lacks the sophistication of many later artists, suggesting it is among the earliest examples. The figure is calm and confident.

Wood, commercial paint, natural pigment, rattan. 172.7 x 63.5 cm.

Collected by Chris Boylan, Mount Hagen, 1998.

Bert Collection, Toronto, Canada.

Photo: Jessica Lindsay Phillips.

Price: \$ 8,000





B33. SHIELD, Wahgi Valley, Jiwaka Province, PNG

Depicting the head of the Phantom

Inscribed: "Phantom" and "Man Who Canot Die". At the base of the shield is a PNG numberplate, attesting to the status and power of the clan, that they owned this valuable vehicle (even though it might now be rusted and useless). This is a rarer depiction, with no body, showing the large face of the Phantom; and the text become most important: words quoted from the comic. These phrases are sometimes written in English, and other times in tok pisin.

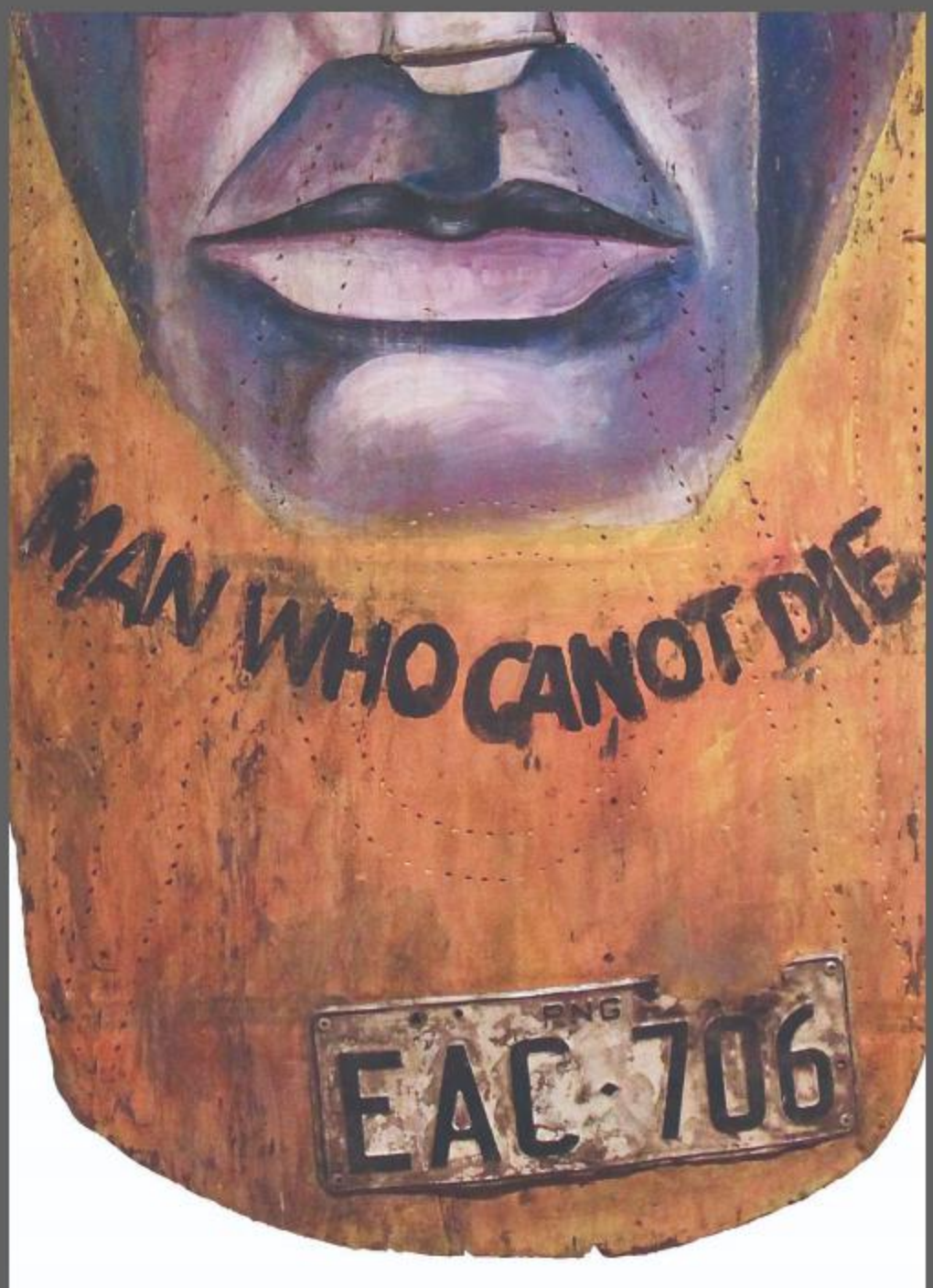
Wood, commercial paint, rattan, automotive license plate. 174 x 67.3 cm.

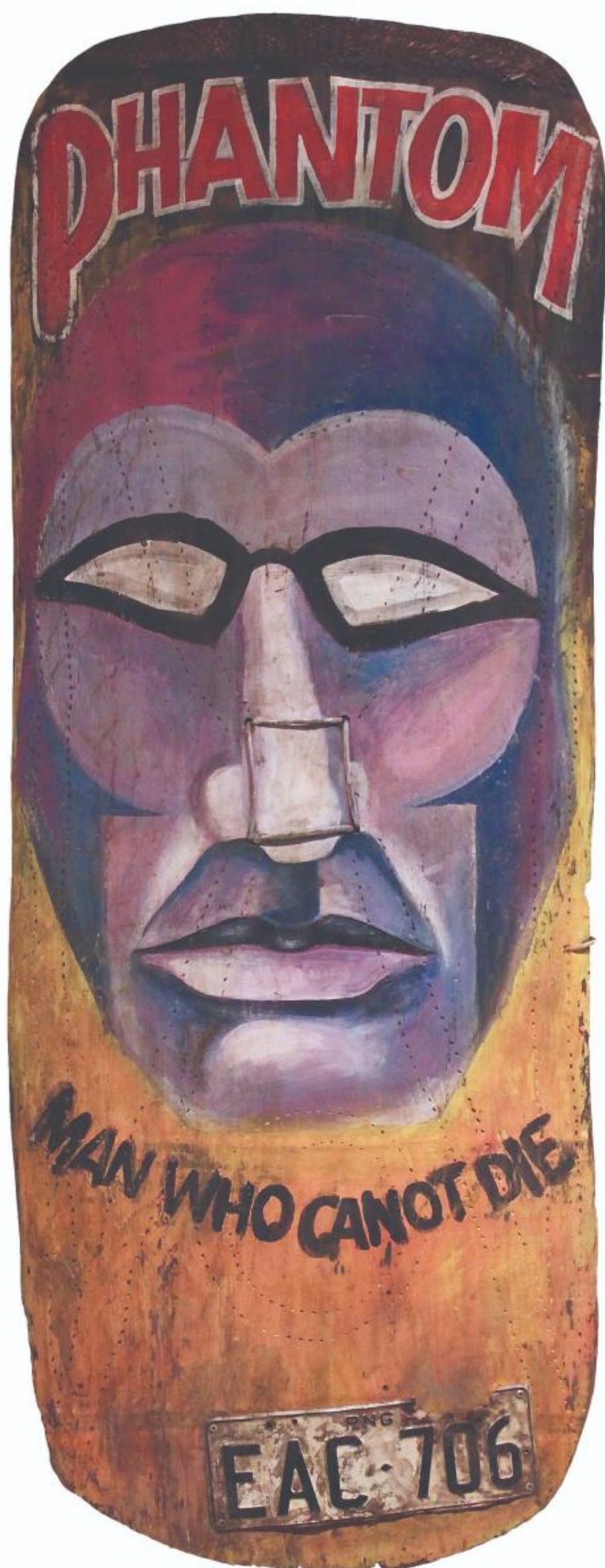
Collected by Chris Boylan, Mount Hagen, 2014.

Bert Collection, Toronto, Canada.

Photo: Jessica Lindsay Phillips.

Price: \$ 7,500





B35. SHIELD, Wahgi Valley, Jiwaka Province, PNG

Depicting head of The Phantom. Underneath are traditional motifs and remnants of old paint. At top in the centre is the Phantom's protecting cypher, from his good ring. Multiple skulls adorn each side of the shield. Skulls are an important element in depicting the Phantom; his skull ring, the skull on his waistband; the skull cave; and they can appear in many different ways. This skull/ ancestor imagery connects strongly to Wahgi cosmology.

Wood, natural pigment, commercial paint, rattan. 114.3 x 58.4 cm.

Collected by Chris Boylan, Mount Hagen, 2000.

Bert Collection, Toronto, Canada.

Photo: Jessica Lindsay Phillips.

Price: \$ 7,000





D7. SHIELD, Wahgi Valley, Jiwaka Province, PNG

Depicting bust of The Phantom holding two pistols

Inscribed: 'The Phantom'

The Phantom with pistols and crossed arms is an often-used image on these shields. And the Phantom also has that strong look ahead, directly where the enemy would be. He shows his upper torso, emerging from the jungle.

Wood, commercial paint, rattan. 172 x 74 cm.

Collected by Chris Boylan, Mount Hagen, 2009.

Private collection, Australia.

Photo: Stephen Oxenbury.

Price: \$ 7,500





F4. SHIELD, Wahgi Valley, Jiwaka Province, PNG

Depicting The Phantom firing two pistols

Inscribed: „ÚPhantom,À

The Phantom is painted red; a change from the purple costume of the comic book hero, but, no doubt, reinforcing some other traditional elements important to the artist or shield owner.

Wood, rattan, natural pigment, commercial paint. 140 x 59 cm.

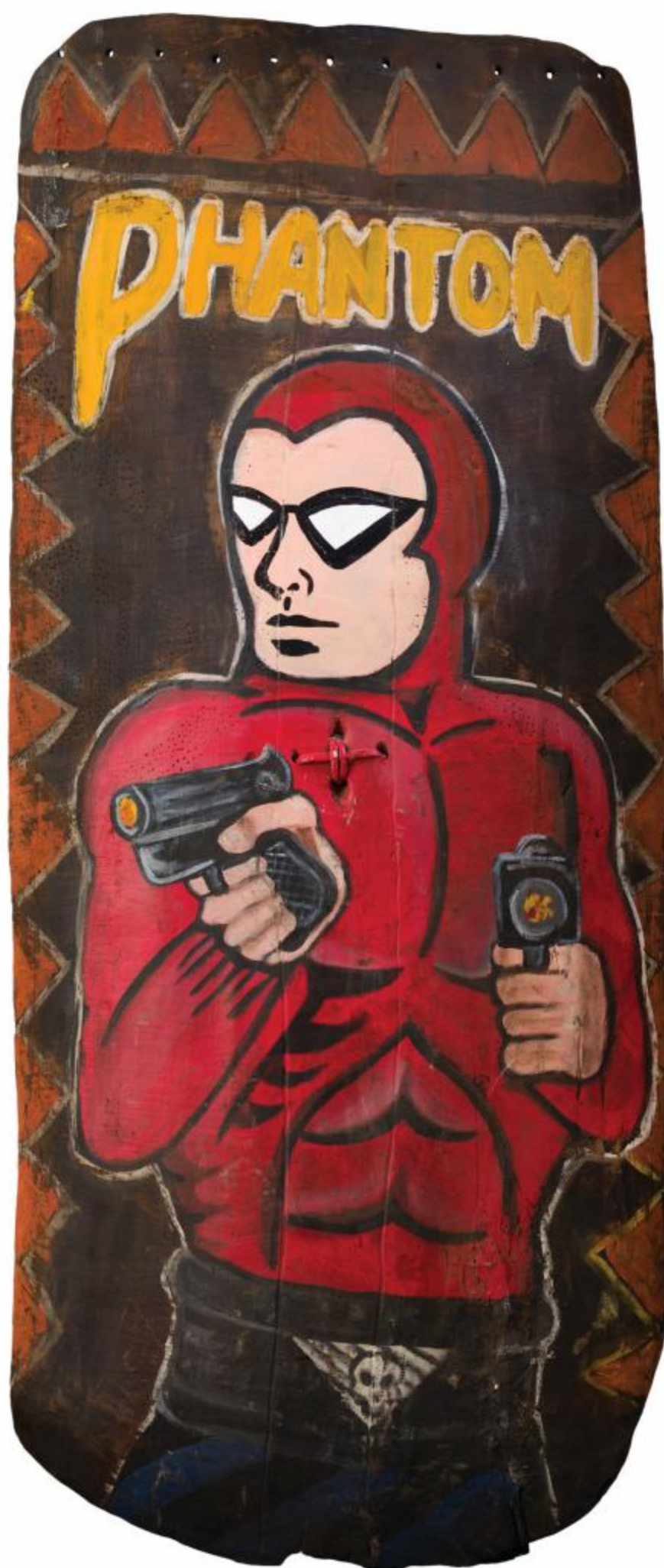
Collected by Chris Boylan, Mount Hagen, 2011.

Private collection, Australia.

Photo: Stephen Oxenbury.

Price: \$ 6,000





F6. SHIELD, Wahgi Valley, Jiwaka Province, PNG

Depicting The Phantom head and shoulders; a blue car number plate at the base
Inscribed: "Phantom"

The Phantom image is very much directly from the comic. His face is strong, impassive, and projects the strength and invincibility that so much appealed to the Wahgi warrior presentation to the world. There is no shading, unlike most shield paintings, simply the flat color that again directly connects to the artist copying from a comic image. Strong colors - red and purple and yellow - are used

Wood, commercial paint, metal number plate, rattan. 158 x 64 cm

Collected by Chris Boylan, Mount Hagen, 2002.

Private collection, Australia

Photo: Stephen Oxenbury

Price: \$ 6,500





16. SHIELD, Wahgi Valley, Jiwaka Province, PNG

Depicting The Phantom standing in front of Skull Cave

Painted by John Wahgi of Andane village, Jiwaka,, before 2012

This artist often depicted The Phantom and his home, the skull cave. This reinforces the ancestral connections, to the place where Wahgi spirits travel after death, to where the Phantom dwelt high in the mountains. These images of skulls - on the Phantom's ring, his waistband and his skull cave home, connect with the Wahgi view of ancestral spirits.

Wood, rattan, commercial paint. 172 x 64 cm.

Collected by Chris Boylan, Wahgi Valley, 2012.

Private collection, Australia.

Photo: Stephen Oxenbury.

Price: \$ 6,000





J4. SHIELD, Wahgi Valley, Western Highlands, PNG

Metal Shield depicting head of The Phantom, surrounded by traditional abstract designs.

Inscribed: „Ú6.2.6,“ , This refers to another contemporary inscription of fighting shields, "Six to Six". See in the book pp 36.

Metal shields developed in the late 1990s or early 2000s in response to the use of guns - home-made guns and shotguns - in tribal warfare. How successful they were is uncertain, but informants maintain if the holder twisted the shield at the right moment, the bullets ricocheted.

Metal, commercial paint, bailing wire. 170 x 88 cm.

Collected by Chris Boylan, Mount Hagen, 2010.

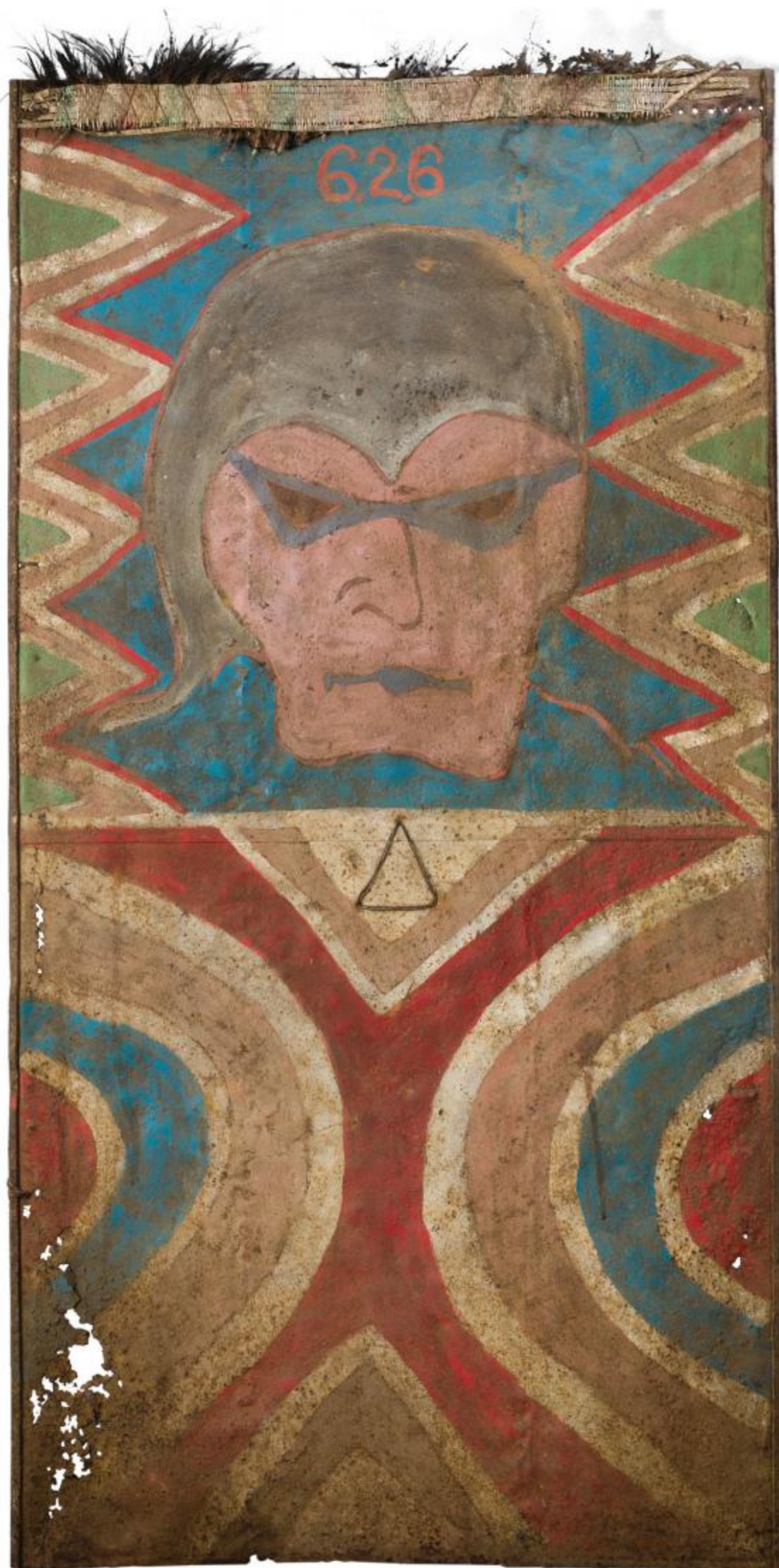
Private collection, Australia.

Photo: Stephen Oxenbury.

Price: \$ 6,000

photo.. Mt. Hagen 2006 by Chris Boylan





K2. SHIELD, Wahgi Valley, Western Highlands, PNG.

Shield depicting The Phantom holding a pistol and a trident

Inscribed in tok pisin, 'ÁúMan ino Save Dai,Àù - literally "Man Who Cannot Die"

Wood, natural pigment, commercial paint, rattan. 154.9 x 68.6 cm.

Collected by Chris Boylan, Mount Hagen, 2012.

Bert Collection, Toronto, Canada.

Photo: Jessica Lindsay Phillips.

\$ 5,500





K3. SHIELD, Wahgi Valley, Western Highlands, PNG

Depicting The Phantom with arms crossed holding two pistols

Inscribed: „Phantom“ and „Man Who Never Dies“ (the "r" of never was either forgotten, or didn't fit, and added below)

Wood, commercial paint, rattan. H: 152.4 cm.

Ex Tokyo Dave, Winnipeg, Manitoba; SkullStore, York, Ontario, Canada.

Jessica Lindsay Phillips Collection, Toronto, Canada.

Photo: Jessica Lindsay Phillips.

Price: \$ 6,000





PHANTOM

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